

Formulaic Language in Byzantine Book Epigrams: A Typology Grounded in Ritually-Charged Pragmatic Functions

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Abstract: *This study examines the formulaic language of Byzantine book epigrams inscribed by scribes in manuscript margins, texts that combine poetic expression with the documentation of manuscript production. While formulaicity in Greek historical texts has been theorised primarily in oral and administrative contexts, the nature of other texts like Byzantine book epigrams remains largely underexplored. Focusing on the most formulaic subset in the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE), namely scribe-related epigrams, the study proposes a typological framework which classifies formulaic sequences by pragmatic function: address, request, thanksgiving, representation of individuals or the community, and recording of practical information. Beyond models grounded in orality, cognitive processing, or epistolary convention, the analysis conceptualises these formulae as ritualised communicative acts embedded in Byzantine manuscript culture, demonstrating how they mediated human-divine relations, reinforced communal identity, and functioned as a performative medium of piety and scribal agency, capturing both formulaic constraint and creative flexibility.*

The epigrams presented herein exemplify an understudied facet of Byzantine manuscript culture: the composition, adaptation, and transcription of book epigrams in manuscript margins by scribes. They constitute concise poetic compositions and function as *paratexts*¹—inscribed on manuscripts, they simultaneously engage with their production and consumption context. Occupying a liminal space between literary expression and

¹ G. Genette, *Seuils*. (Paris 1987).

practical documentation, they record in verse details such as the scribe's name, the patron's identity, the completion date, and the place of production. Thus, their significance extends beyond mere literary value; offering insights into the materiality of the book and its social function, they also reveal the interconnectedness of its various agents, and their community's with God, constituting poetic records of their social and religious milieu.

(1) *Type 6977*:²

Τῷ συντελεστῇ τῶν καλῶν Θεῷ χάρις·
 Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον καὶ πόνος Γεωργίου
 τοῦ πίκλην Καρυκᾶ· ἐγράφη ἡ βίβλος
 αὕτη διὰ χειρὸς ἐμοῦ τοῦ χωρικοῦ
 γραφέως Γεωργίου Καρυκᾶ τοῦ Ἀργυροῦ
 ἐν ἔτει τρέχοντος, χιλιάδας ἕξ [...]
 ὀκτῶ καὶ ἐπιφέροντα ἑκατοντάδας
 δεκάδαν μίαν, πρὸ τῆς τετάρτης
 ἴνδικτον καὶ ἄγοντος δ' [...]
 Τὸν ἀναγινάσκοντα σὺν π[ροθυμίᾳ / ολλῶ πόθῳ]³,
 τὸν δακτύλοις γράψαντα, τὸν κεκτημένον,
 φύλαττε τοὺς τρεῖς, ᾧ Τριάς, τρισολβίως.

transl.:⁴

Grace to God, the bestower of all good things.
(This is) a gift from God and the labour of Georgios,
 also called Karykas; this book here
 was written by the hand of me, the humble
 scribe Georgios Karykas of Argyros
 in the present year, six thousand (...)
 eight hundred and
 ten, before the fourth

² The material discussed is available in the [Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams](#). Each record name links to its corresponding entry. For further information on the database, see Section 2.

³ Respecting the meter and comparing similar epigrams, I propose two options for reconstructing the missing text.

⁴ All translations are the author's, unless stated otherwise.

indiction and during (...).

**The one reading this with (eagerness / much yearning),
the one who wrote it with his fingers, and the owner—
guard these three, O Trinity, in threefold bliss.**

(2) *Type 6894:*

Τὸν δακτύλοις γράψαντα, τὸν κεκτημένον,
τὸν δὲ ἀναγινώσκοντα μετ' εὐλαβείας,
φύλαττε τοὺς τρεῖς, ᾧ Τριάς παναγία.
Ὡς ἰππεὺς ταχυδρόμος, ἡ χεὶρ ἐνταῦθα,
διαδραμοῦσα βυθὸν γραμμάτων τόσον,
ἦκ' οὖν πνευστιῶν εἰς τέλος τῆς πυξίδος
ἐπευχαριστῶν τὸν συντελεστήν πάντα.

**The one who wrote this with his fingers, the owner,
and the one reading it with reverence—
guard these three, O most holy Trinity.**

Like a swift courier on horseback, the hand here
swiftly traversed this sea of letters;
and so, breathless, has reached the end of the book
giving thanks to the bestower of all things.

(3) *Occurrence 24022:*

+ Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον καὶ Μανουήλ πόνος.

A gift of God, the labour of Manouel.

In (1), the scribe invokes divine grace for himself, the reader, and the patron. A similar supplication in (2) introduces a key linguistic feature of these epigrams—formulaicity, the focus of this study. Recurring patterns within these texts signal shared conventions within the scribal community, manifesting in various forms. In some instances, we observe the reproduction of nearly fixed formulae (as in (1) vv.10–12 and (2) vv.1–3), while other patterns are more abstract (as in (1) v.1 and (2) v.8). Nevertheless, this does not preclude creativity, as demonstrated in (2) (vv.5–7), where novel elements appear amid formulaic material. Adaptation is also common; certain formulae present slots for context-specific information, such as the

scribe's name, though this may occasionally disrupt the metre, as seen in (3) compared to the formula as in (1) (v.2).⁵ This dynamic blend of fixed expressions, variation, and creative additions renders Byzantine epigrams a compelling corpus for advancing the study of formulaicity in the Byzantine historical context.

This study does not focus on the epigrams as individual texts but rather on the recurring formulaic elements they incorporate, linking the former in complex ways. At the phrase level, I explore how these formulae function across epigrams. While the linguistic feature of formulaicity is central, these texts cannot be studied in isolation from their cultural and religious context. By classifying formulaic elements, I aim to identify their communicative purposes within the Byzantine communities which produce, copy, and consume book epigrams. Beyond the individual epigrams, these sequences—repetitive and standardised to varying extents—reflect a set of embedded conventions serving communicative and ritualistic functions within the Byzantine ‘text community’ (the historical equivalent of a ‘speech community’).⁶ By adopting a corpus-driven approach, I categorise formulaic elements according to their pragmatic functions, elucidating their connection to broader religious and social practices.

To begin, I present the corpus of this study (Section 2). I then assert the necessity of a corpus-specific typology in lieu of pre-existing models for classifying formulaic sequences (Section 3). Subsequently, I outline a conceptual framework, and situate Byzantine

⁵ The formula in (3) presents 11 syllables, deviating from the expected 12-syllable structure of e.g. (1), v.2. This discrepancy arises from the scribe's name, which counts three syllables in the former and four in the latter. Though, formulaic elements tend to be the most metrically consistent parts of book epigrams; cf. the non-formulaic parts of (1) (ll.3-9): lines 3 and 4 present 12 syllables, but with a *caesura* at the 6th rather than the more typical 5th syllable; lines 4 and 5 exhibit the less common oxytonic ending instead of the expected paroxytonic; line 5 counts 12 syllables if Γεωργίου is read with the vernacular/modern Greek pronunciation [ˈjor ɣu] instead of [je ˈor ˈji u].

⁶ M. Stenroos, “From Scribal Repertoire to Text Community: The Challenge of Variable Writing Systems,” in J. Cromwell and E. Grossman (eds.), *Scribal repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the early Islamic period*. (Oxford 2018) 20–40.

book epigrams within their historical and cultural milieu, with particular emphasis on the Christian framework shaping their production (Section 4). In this context, I briefly discuss manuscript copying and epigram composition as rituals in their own right. Following this, I present the methodology (Section 5), before I define the formulaic material under study and present the typology of formulae, organised by pragmatic functions and illustrated with representative examples of their use in epigram composition (Section 6). The outcome of this paper is a typology of formulaic material in book epigrams stored in the [Database of Byzantine Epigrams \(DBBE\)](#), categorised by communicative and ritual purposes. This study thereby seeks to deepen our understanding of the role of formulaic language in shaping communication interwoven with literary expression within a deeply religious cultural tradition.

1. Corpus: 'Scribe-related' Byzantine book epigrams

This study utilises data from the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE), a digital repository that collects, transcribes, standardises, contextualises and presents Byzantine book epigrams.⁷ The DBBE distinguishes between 'Occurrences'—specific instances of epigrams as they appear in manuscripts, preserving original scribal choices—and 'Types', which consolidate similar 'Occurrences' into standardised versions.⁸ While 'Occurrences' retain orthographic, morphological and specific contextual nuances, 'Types' streamline comparative study, making them optimal for efficiently identifying formulaic patterns across different epigrams.

⁷ The digitisation of Byzantine book epigrams, with encoded metadata, renders them well-suited to digitally driven research. This distinguishes them from other, closely related corpora—such as epigrams on various writing media (see A. Rhoby, *Byzantinische Epigramme*, Vols. 1–3 (Vienna 2009, 2010, 2014)), and metrical legends on lead seals (see A.K. Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden*, Tle. 1–2)—which are not yet available in comparably structured digital format. Comparative analysis between the material examined hereby and the corpus compiled by A. Rhoby is currently underway.

⁸ R. Ricceri et al. "The Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams project: Principles, challenges, opportunities," *JDMDH* (2023) 7–8.

This analysis focuses on the ‘Types’ within the ‘Scribe-related’ genre,⁹ comprising 1,849 entries representing 3,866 out of a grand total of 12,297 ‘Occurrences’.¹⁰ The decision to work with ‘Types’ is both practical and strategic. The standardisation of ‘Types’ eliminates variation irrelevant to this study’s scope, such as orthographic inconsistencies or contextual additions in predetermined slots of formulae.¹¹ Thus, the standardisation of ‘Types’ enables an efficient analysis of formulaic sequences in use by the scribal community, in their most generalised form, unencumbered by idiosyncratic deviations per occasion.

‘Scribe-related’ epigrams,¹² centred on scribes, scribal activity and the context of manuscript production, serve both literary and practical functions by recording names, dates, and places.¹³ Their utilitarian purpose particularly fosters formulaicity, as recurring documentation needs are efficiently addressed through pre-established expressions which remain adaptable to specific contexts. Despite their formulaic core, epigrams also accommodate creativity, as scribes integrate personal choices within conventionalised frames, exemplifying a dynamic interplay between standardisation and innovation. This duality makes ‘Scribe-related’ epigrams the most formulaic genre in the DBBE corpus¹⁴ while still reflecting individ-

⁹ For the concept of (sub)genre as used in the DBBE, see K. Demoen, “Reading: Book Epigrams: Introduction,” in F. Spingou (ed.), *The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium (1081-c.1350): Vol. 3.II.* (Cambridge 2022) 1369–1380, at 1374ff.

¹⁰ This study is based on annotations made on data exported from the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams as of November 2024. The database is being continuously updated and enriched with new material, reflecting ongoing scholarly efforts of the DBBE Team.

¹¹ K. Giannikou et al., “Decoding Byzantine Book Epigrams: An Exploration of Machine-Assisted Extraction of Formulaic Material,” in C. Swaelens et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the First Workshop on Data-Driven Approaches to Ancient Languages (DAAL 2024)*. (Ghent 2024) 22–32, at 25.

¹² Epigrams can simultaneously belong to multiple (sub)genres. ‘Scribe-related’ epigrams partially overlap with ‘colophons’ in M.D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*. Vol. 1 (Vienna 2003), at 200–201.

¹³ Demoen, in *The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium* 1374.

¹⁴ Demoen, in *The Visual Culture of Later Byzantium* 1374; F. Bernard and K.

ual expression. Their content also reveals insights into the social and cultural practices embedded in Byzantine manuscript production, shedding light into the function of these patterns. It therefore presents an optimal subset for the examination of (textual) community-specific employment of formulaic language.

By focusing on this subset, I aim to establish a typology of formulaic sequences that reveals their deeper ritualised communicative functions within the Byzantine scribal community.

2. *Reviewing approaches in formulaicity research*

A substantial body of linguistic scholarship has examined the phenomenon of formulaicity, understood as the repetitive use of linguistic expressions that may be either fixed or variable, yet retain a recognisable structure within a given context. Central to this research are efforts of classification of formulaic sequences, with scholars emphasising that formulaicity is “not a single and unified phenomenon.”¹⁵ The prevailing consensus holds that formulaicity operates along a continuum shaped by degrees of fixedness, semantic transparency, and other variables.¹⁶ The conceptual and terminological diversity within the field further underscores the complexity of the phenomenon.¹⁷

2.1. *Formulaicity in spoken language*

Most theoretical frameworks addressing formulaicity are geared towards spoken material. Wray identifies the reduction of processing effort for both speaker and listener—alongside discourse structuring and listener manipulation—as key functions of formulaic se-

Demoen, “Byzantine Book Epigrams,” in W. Hörandner, A. Rhoby, and N. Zagklas (eds.), *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry* (Leiden 2019) 404–429, at 420.

¹⁵ A. Wray, *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (Cambridge 2002) 66.

¹⁶ Wray, *Formulaic Language* 62–65; D. Wood, “Classifying and Identifying Formulaic Language,” in S. Webb (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Vocabulary Studies* (New York 2019) 30–45.

¹⁷ A. Wray and M. R. Perkins, “The Functions of Formulaic Language: An Integrated Model,” *Lang Commun.* 20 (2000) 1–28, at 3.

quences.¹⁸ Processed holistically rather than analytically, they help alleviate cognitive load.¹⁹ Linguistic research often relies on phonological and performance-based cues—such as intonation, fluency, and speed of articulation—to identify formulaicity.²⁰ Such markers, however, are not available for ancient written corpora. While palaeographic evidence may provide indirect clues—such as ‘chunking’ of formulaic sequences as semantic units within metrical patterns, often marked by punctuation²¹—the reliability of such markers remains debatable.

In studies of earlier phases of Greek, formulaicity has been interpreted as a response to the demands of oral performance, particularly of lengthy epic poetry.²² Even in this tradition, scholarly classifications of formula types vary considerably,²³ complicating the establishment of a unified framework potentially applicable to later corpora. In Byzantine texts, further complications arise from the contested extent of orality and the shifting nature of metre, which increasingly diverged from ancient prosodic systems as accentual patterns started shaping poetic practice. Research on Byzantine popular poetry also invokes orality to explain formulaicity, even when a performance context is neither certain nor particularly plausible.²⁴

¹⁸ Wray, *Formulaic Language* 93–102.

¹⁹ K. Kuiper, *Smooth Talkers: The Linguistic Performance of Auctioneers and Sportscasters* (Mahwah 1996) 3; Wray, *Formulaic Language*; A. Wray, *Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries* (Oxford–New York 2008).

²⁰ Wray, *Formulaic Language* 35–39.

²¹ J. Boeten et al., *Byzantine Metre from the Margins: A Corpus-Based, Pragmatic Analysis of Medieval Book Epigrams* [PhD dissertation] (UGhent 2021) 179–193; C. M. Mazzucchi, “Per una Punteggiatura Non Anacronistica, e Più Efficace, dei Testi Greci,” *BBGG* 51 (1997) 129–143, punctuation different from modern conventions.

²² A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge 1960).

²³ C. Bozzone, *Homer’s Living Language: Formularity, Dialect, and Creativity in Oral-Traditional Poetry* (Cambridge 2024) 6–20.

²⁴ R. Beaton, “Orality and the Reception of Late Byzantine Vernacular Literature,” *BMGs* 14(1) (1990) 174–184; F. H. Bäuml, “Medieval Texts and the Two Theories of Oral-Formulaic Composition: A Proposal for a Third Theory,” *New Lit.Hist.* 16(1) (1984) 31–49, beyond Greek.

Crucially, as Wray²⁵ notes, this function of reducing cognitive effort is less applicable to written corpora, where pressures of production and comprehension speed are typically absent. While formulaic expressions may streamline writing in administrative or epistolary settings, this context differs from that of the epigrams under study. Unlike the former, epigrams exhibit distinct literary and stylistic features (e.g. metrical structure, use of Homeric or elevated register, and creative elaboration), suggesting that their formulaicity serves purposes beyond compositional convenience. Therefore, conceptualising them solely as cognitive load reducing devices oversimplifies their function.

2.2. *Detecting formulaicity: native speaker intuition*

Another major theoretical approach to formulaicity relies on native speaker intuition. Wray acknowledges the value of intuitive judgement in identifying formulaic language.²⁶ However, this resource is unavailable when working with historical corpora; the analysis of ancient texts is limited to a frequency-based form of intuitive bias, derived from the specific set of texts to which researchers have been exposed.

2.3. *Formulaicity in written historical corpora*

Rutten and van der Wal²⁷ have proposed an alternative to the processing effort model, shifting the focus to writing experience in historical corpora. They argue that less experienced letter writers rely on formulaic expressions to produce appropriate and effective letters. However, applying this to the corpus of Byzantine book epigrams presents challenges. If epigrams followed the same logic, one would expect skilled epigram composers to avoid formulaic material. Yet, formulae remain pervasive even in epigrams marked by elevated linguistic sophistication and stylistic creativity. Learned

²⁵ Wray, *Formulaic Language* 84.

²⁶ Wray, *Pushing the Boundaries* 114ff.

²⁷ G. Rutten and M. van der Wal, "Functions of Epistolary Formulae in Dutch Letters from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *J.Hist.Pragmat.* 13(2) (2012) 173–201.

scribes frequently employ multiple formulae—sometimes in basic form, sometimes expanded—to craft elaborate and intricate epigrams.²⁸

Formulaicity in Greek historical corpora has also been studied outside the context of orality, especially in documentary texts. While some research on legal formulae exists,²⁹ it remains sporadic and lacks comprehensive coverage. A more systematic approach has been applied to post-classical letter writing, where scholars categorise formulaic elements in the opening and closing sections according to their pragmatic functions.³⁰ While this functional approach offers valuable insights for the analysis of epigrams, the communicative dynamics differ: whereas letter writing aims at direct interpersonal exchange, epigrams—though often framed as if addressing a recipient—transcend that (see Section 4.1).

As has been shown, attributing the formulaicity of epigrams to a purely oral performance context proves unreliable. This approach overlooks the distinctive characteristics of written composition, particularly in a context where literary and stylistic considerations are central. Furthermore, applying theoretical frameworks and analytical tools developed for modern oral interactions to this corpus is problematic, as is supplementing frequency-based analysis with intuitive judgements, given the absence of native speaker input for historical texts. Moreover, the corpus exists within the literary and poetic tradition while also serving communicative and documentation purposes. These diverse roles are unified by an omnipresent layer of Christian piety expression (see Section 4.1), which binds the various functions of book epigrams. This interplay of factors necessitates a distinct analytical approach—one capable of addressing the multifaceted roles of formulaic sequences in this corpus, while

²⁸ E.g. [Type 4345](#).

²⁹ H. Saradi, “A History of the Greek Notarial System,” in S. Schmoeckel and W. Schubert (eds.), *Handbuch zur Geschichte des Notariats der Europäischen Traditionen* (2009) 523–557.

³⁰ D. Nachtergaele, *The Formulaic Language of the Greek Private Papyrus Letters* (Leuven 2023); K. Bentein, “A Typology of Variations in the Ancient Greek Epistolary Frame (I–III AD),” in G. K. Giannakis et al. (eds.), *Classical Philology and Linguistics: Old Themes and New Perspectives* (Berlin–Boston 2023) 429–472, at 440–446.

appropriately considering its cultural, religious and stylistic dimensions. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to develop a typology that accounts for the literary, pragmatic, and ritualised dimensions of the epigrams, offering a framework that reflects the corpus's complexity and its embedded cultural and religious significance.

3. *Conceptual framework*

This study approaches formulaicity in Byzantine book epigrams primarily through a ritual lens, supplemented by insights from speech act theory. Within this framework, formulaic language is interpreted as a vehicle of ritualised communication, embodying tradition, structuring devotional expression, and reinforcing collective religious identity.

3.1 *Ritual and Ritual pragmatics: a multi-layered ritual context*

Unlike approaches that reduce ritual to mere rote or meaningless repetition, this study adopts a view of ritual as a structured and symbolically charged practice. Drawing on Tambiah's definition of ritual as "a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication,"³¹ formulaic expressions in these epigrams are conceptualised as integral to rites of exchange, fostering human-divine interaction and communal cohesion. Ritualisation, as theorised by Bell,³² further elucidates how formulaic expressions acquire symbolic weight, contributing to the cohesion of Byzantine scribal and devotional communities.

Ritual pragmatics complements this perspective by attending to the conventions, rights, and obligations governing interactions within prescribed social frameworks.³³ Formulaic patterns are understood not merely as lexical strings but as pragmatic acts shaped by collective expectations. Their meaning derives from their function within the 'ritual frame',³⁴ fulfilling both spiritual and social purposes—whether as rites of exchange between humans and the

³¹ S.J. Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual* (Oxford 1979) 119.

³² C.M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford 2009) 221–222.

³³ D.Z. Kádár, *Ritual and Language* (Cambridge 2024) 15.

³⁴ Kádár, *Ritual and Language* 32–35.

divine or by reaffirming communal memory and performing socially consequential work through ritualised deployment.

The production of Byzantine manuscripts exemplifies this dual-layered ritual context. On one level, it was embedded within Christian ritual life: the act of copying carried spiritual significance as participation in a ritual—in the anthropological sense of communal religious activities—and materially realised in the creation of valuable artefacts, manuscripts.³⁵ On another level, manuscript production was governed by conventions³⁶ and shared expectations fulfilled through repetitive procedures, rendering it a pragmatic ritual: structured, repetitive, and communally oriented. This duality highlights manuscript production as not mechanical reproduction but a symbolically charged act situated within a broader socio-religious framework.

The convergence of these dimensions is particularly evident in the inscription of self-referential epigrams in the margins. Like manuscript copying, it simultaneously expressed Christian piety—embedding spiritual meaning into the material object—and conformed to established conventions, thus functioning as a structured, repetitive act governed by communal expectations. In this way, epigram composition reinforced the same spiritual and pragmatic dimensions that characterised manuscript production itself.

The role of formulaic language is central to this process of ritualisation. Formulae served as the primary vehicles through which both levels are enacted. Firstly, the vast majority of formulaic material is explicitly religious in content, reflecting Christian devotion and aligning with broader communal practices of worship. Secondly, formulaic language is inherently conventional: it is standardised, recognisable, and communally validated. Its employment ensures fulfilment of the community's expectations.

As Riehle has shown for Byzantine epistolary practices, such patterned interactions were structured and symbolic, reflecting socio-cultural and religious imperatives and reinforcing social identities

³⁵ B. Crostini, “Byzantium,” in J. Raven (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Book* (Oxford 2023) 54–83, at 80.

³⁶ Specific procedures though varied by location; see Crostini, in *The Oxford History of the Book*.

within elite communities.³⁷ Similarly, Byzantine book epigrams function as sites where formulaic language not only conveys meaning but also enacts ritualised interactions reflective of the broader cultural and religious milieu. By participating in a shared repertoire, both scribes and readers engage in a performative reaffirmation of communal identities, ensuring the continuity of ritualised practices through the symbolic and pragmatic force of formulaic language.

3.2. *Speech act theory*

Building on the ritual-pragmatic framework outlined above, speech act theory provides a complementary linguistic perspective by foregrounding the performativity of formulaic expressions. Rather than analysing language solely in terms of semantic content, this model conceptualises utterances as forms of action, distinguishing between the locutionary act (the utterance and its propositional content), the illocutionary act (the function this utterance performs), and the perlocutionary act (its intended/actual effect on the recipient).³⁸ Although devised in relation to modern, secular speech contexts, their broader theoretical premises remain applicable to the premodern, religious, and highly conventionalised texts examined hereby.

This study takes the illocutionary dimension of speech act theory as a primary point of reference for constructing a functional typology of formulaic expressions in Byzantine book epigrams. Formulae, far from being ornamental, redundant, or passively employed relics of tradition, are here examined as intentional and functionally significant performative utterances employed within the ritualised context of manuscript production.

Accordingly, this study proposes a functional typology of formulaic expressions in Byzantine book epigrams, grounded in a func-

³⁷ Riehle, *Funktionen der Byzantinischen Epistolographie* 2–3; A. Riehle, “Rhetorik, Ritual Und Repräsentation. Zur Briefliteratur Gebildeter Eliten Im Spätbyzantinischen Konstantinopel (1261–1328),” *FMSI* 45 (2011) 259–276. On formulaicity in Byzantine letter writing, see also M. Grünbart, “Aus der Formularsammlung eines königlichen Sekretärs auf Zypern: Ein Fall typischer Mimesis oder Alltag in einer Kanzlei?,” *MEG* 16 (2016) 113–117.

³⁸ J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (Oxford 1962).

tional perspective inspired by speech act theory and attuned to the ritual pragmatics of manuscript culture. By interpreting these formulae through their illocutionary force, it becomes possible to uncover the underlying logic of their deployment and to situate them within the broader pragmatic and symbolic economy of their Byzantine socio-religious context.

4. Method: annotation parameters & the centrality of *Function*

This section delineates the methodology employed in the construction of the typology of formulaic material within the ‘Scribe-related’ sub-corpus of the DBBE, with particular emphasis on the annotation parameter of *Function*, which emerged as the central criterion for an effective categorisation process. A preliminary study utilised a machine-assisted approach to identify recurring formulaic sequences, offering initial insights into their Christian-religious character, potential alignment with metrical units, and the notable flexibility of the patterns.³⁹ The present paper builds on this groundwork and aims at capturing further characteristics of the material and organising it into a typology.

Although all parameters (*Length*, *Position in Metre*, *Function*, *Semantic Transparency*, *Lexical Fixedness*, *Syntax*) provided valuable insights into the nature of the formulaic material, some proved non-suitable for the development of the typology, and, thus, will not be discussed in detail herein. *Length* and *Position in Metre* were of limited relevance, as most formulaic expressions span multiple units or verses, and their alignment with metrical units proved highly inconsistent due to creative elaborations. Similarly, *Semantic Transparency*,⁴⁰ did not yield meaningful distinctions for this corpus, given that almost all formulae were semantically transparent. *Lexical Fixedness* and

³⁹ Giannikou, in *Proceedings of DAAL 2024*.

⁴⁰ *Semantic transparency* refers to the degree to which the meaning of a phrase can be deduced from the individual meanings of its constituent words, with higher transparency indicating a more compositional and literal interpretation, and lower transparency suggesting a non-compositional, idiomatic or opaque meaning that cannot be (easily) inferred from its parts (Skandera 2007; Wood 2015; Wood 2019: 32–33).

*Syntax*⁴¹ were also examined in terms of variation across patterns; however, the degree of flexibility individual pattern employments exhibit in these areas did not substantively contribute to the formation of a well-defined typology of types of formulaic material.

Function proved to be the decisive factor in the classification of formulaic expressions. Drawing on Wray's conception, formulaic sequences are seen as "linguistic solutions to a single, non-linguistic problem": the manipulation of the hearer.⁴² Initial analysis of the corpus' formulaic material revealed that its function not only pertains to the hearer—in this context, the reader of the text—but also, significantly, to God,⁴³ an observation which aligns with findings of Rutten and van der Wal.⁴⁴ There are formulae which engage the implied reader to fulfil diverse communicative purposes, such as seeking spiritual aid or recognition, conveying the author's identity, fostering appreciation of the book, or establishing a personal rapport, while others make more abstract or collective appeals.⁴⁵ Equally, a substantial part of the formulaic material addresses God, aiming to seek divine support and protection, express praise, or offer gratitude. However, a binary distinction between reader- and divine-directed formulae proved overly simplistic and insufficiently descriptive, especially given the diversity. Consequently, the *Function* parameter was transformed into a dynamic criterion, incorporating categories based on both semantic purpose and intended addressee, thus allowing for a nuanced classification of the material.

In conclusion, while several annotation parameters were considered during the typology's construction, it was *Function* that emerged as the most effective criterion for categorising the formulaic material. This approach aims towards a better understanding of the

⁴¹ *Lexical fixedness* tracks the degree to which formulaic sequences allow for substitutions of words, morphological variations, or insertions of additional elements, while *Syntax* assesses structural consistency (Wood 2019: 33; Wray 2002: 34).

⁴² Wray, *Formulaic Language* 93–95.

⁴³ Giannikou, in *Proceedings of DAAL 2024* 29.

⁴⁴ Rutten and van der Wal, *J.Hist.Pragmat.* 13(2) 181ff.

⁴⁵ K. Bentein and K. Demoen, "The Reader in Eleventh-Century Book Epigrams," in F. Bernard and K. Demoen (eds.), *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Burlington 2012) 69–88, at 87.

role of formulaic language in Byzantine manuscript production, recognising the varied communicative functions these expressions served in reinforcing social, religious, and personal identities. The typology, as presented below, encapsulates the relationship between formulaic language and the ritualised practices of manuscript production, providing a tool for interpreting them as part of the broader context of Byzantine book epigrams.

5. A typology of formulaic material based on ritually-charged pragmatic functions

The typology of formulaic sequences developed in this study is grounded in the ‘Scribe-related’ Byzantine book epigrams (Section 2), embedded within a dual-layered ritual framework consisting of the ritualised nature of ‘communication’ and the pervasive expression of Christian piety (Section 4.1). Together, these elements contribute to high frequency of formulaic language in these texts. The formulaic sequences identified serve pragmatic functions, systematically annotated via the Function parameter (Section 5).

Although Byzantine book epigrams do not conform to conventional interpersonal communication—addressing either God or an abstract audience of future readers—their formulaic sequences do exhibit characteristics akin to pragmatic formulae.⁴⁶ By fulfilling specific functions within discourse, they parallel pragmatic formulae in spoken language, which maintain coherence and social order, yet operate within a framework shaped by the dual influences of Christian piety and Byzantine scribal tradition. To this end, the typology is designed to categorise formulaic patterns based on their communicative functions rather than on formal features, since formulae exhibit considerable formal variation across their individual instances.

5.1. An updated definition of the DBBE formula

Before proceeding to delineate the categories of the developed typology, it is necessary to offer a precise definition of what is hereby

⁴⁶ Wood, in *The Routledge Handbook of Vocabulary Studies* 35.

considered a formulaic sequence within the Database of Byzantine Book Epigrams (DBBE), grounded in observations drawn from the annotation of its most formulaic sub-corpus, that of ‘Scribe-related’ epigrams.⁴⁷

Formulaic sequences in the DBBE are defined as recurring linguistic units that are integral to the ritual practices of the Byzantine scribal ‘text community’.⁴⁸ These sequences fulfil pragmatic functions within a ritualised communicative framework shaped by the omnipresent influence of Christian ritual and theological discourse. Their primary purpose lies in reinforcing communal identity and ensuring the continuity of the scribal tradition, functioning as indispensable linguistic tools through which scribes actively engage with their socio-religious milieu.

Central to this definition is the criterion of *Function*, which serves as the principal parameter for categorisation. Formulaic sequences are evaluated in terms of their pragmatic roles within ritualised discourse, while their formal features remain to be systematically explored in a separate study. This methodological stance emerges from the observation that no consistent correlation can be drawn between specific formal structures and pragmatic functions across the corpus; rather, the material exhibits a notable degree of formal flexibility. This absence of a rigid form-function mapping underscores the adaptive and context-dependent nature of formulaic expressions, and has prompted the construction of the typology on functional grounds.

To qualify as formulaic within this context, sequences must meet the following criteria, aside from frequent recurrence. First, they should exhibit a level of **specificity**, marking them as belonging to the shared repertoire of the scribal community, thus distinguishing them from generic collocations—recurrent word pairings—of

⁴⁷ Note that metrical dates are here excluded; they often appear in lines with metrical difficulties, while most appear in prose, following book epigrams, and are thus not included in the Database. On metrical dates in similar material, see A. Rhoby, “‘When the year ran through six times of thousands...’: The Date in (Inscriptional) Byzantine Epigrams,” in St. Efthymiadis et al. (eds.), *“Pour une poésie de Byzance”. Hommage à Vassilis Katsaros*. (Paris 2015) 223-242.

⁴⁸ Text community as defined in Stenroos, in *Scribal Repertoires* 25.

the ancient Greek language at large (e.g. the collocation βίβλος + λαμβάνω + τέλος⁴⁹). Furthermore, formulaic sequences must display a degree of **recognisability**, such that they can be identified across attestations despite different degrees of variation in form. Additionally, such sequences must demonstrate **adaptability** within the scribal communicative framework. Epigrams or elements that recur unaltered, without signs of adaptation, modification, or integration into new contexts, are regarded as cases of simple reproduction and therefore lack the dynamic engagement with communal identity that defines formulaic material herein. Lastly, formulaic sequences must show **functional autonomy**, operating as self-sufficient pragmatic units, without this criterion necessarily implying monofunctionality.

A further specification is required regarding the scope of what counts as functional and functionally autonomous. While the last criterion and the functional perspective adopted here is inspired by speech-act theory, the definition of DBBE formulae is not restricted to expressions that realise a full speech act in the strict sense. Independent pragmatic modifiers are also included, provided they occur as self-contained units that adjust or index the illocutionary force of a speech act (e.g. in (18), v.1 σὺν Θεῷ, which implicitly conveys acknowledgement and gratitude to the divine (category 2)). By contrast, sequences that fulfil the other criteria but occur only as fully embedded, often parenthetical elements (e.g. invocations to the divine; see discussion under category 1.2) or only in relation to another formulaic sequence (e.g. formulaic addresses to the reader within requests; see discussion of category 1.2) lack functional autonomy; these are here termed, at most, sub-formulaic elements, and are not treated as independent entries within the typology.

By foregrounding their functional dimension, this definition emphasises the dynamic, context-dependent, and inherently participatory nature of formulaic sequences. It conceptualises them as essential to the scribes' active role in constructing and perpetuating

⁴⁹ The collocation is cited in its lemmatised form. Within the corpus of 1,849 Scribe-related Types, it occurs over 100 times, exhibiting variation in morphological features, word order, and lexical choice with βίβλος occasionally substituted by a set of synonyms.

a shared communal identity, proposing a systematic, functionally grounded typological framework for the categorisation of such formulaic material without separating it from its broader ritual and socio-religious context in which they operate.

5.2. Presenting the typology: a formulaic language how-to for the Byzantine scribe

The typology outlined below classifies formulaic sequences found in ‘Scribe-related’ Byzantine book epigrams based on their pragmatic functions. These functions reflect the practical, communal, and spiritual dimensions of scribal activity, encapsulating the broader ritual framework within which such texts were produced and used. The typology identifies three main categories: supplicatory formulae directed toward the divine or appeals to the reader; gratitude expressions to the divine; formulae presenting individual identities, shared experiences, and contextual information pertinent to book production and consumption.

Category 1. *Requests*

This category comprises formulaic sequences fulfilling one of two request functions: (1.1) supplication to the divine or (1.2) appeal to the reader. Beyond serving as communicative tools, they reflect the scribe’s dual audience—divine and human—and embody the devotional and interactive dimensions of the material. In terms of prevalence, this category constitutes the second-richest group within the typology, surpassed only by formulae of gratitude for the divine. Its prominence underscores the standardised need in ‘Scribe-related’ Byzantine book epigrams to petition either divine favour or human response.

1.1. Supplication to the divine

Supplications to the divine align closely with Christian ritual practices, as scribes articulate prayers to God seeking divine intervention, guidance, or mercy. Situated within the religious framework, these formulae transcend expression of personal piety; they also reflect the communal religious identity embedded in the scribal tra-

dition.

A prominent example of a supplicatory formulae, introduced earlier, spans three verses ((1), vv.10–12; (2), vv.1–3), invoking divine protection for the three principal agents involved in manuscript production and consumption: the scribe, the patron, and the reader. An altered variant of this formula, below:

(4) *Type 2733*:

Τὸν συντεθέντα Φιλαδελφείας πόθῳ
Μακάριον, ταπεινὸν ἐν τοῖς σοῖς θύταις,
φύλαττε Τριάς ἁγία τρισολβίως.

The one who composed this with yearning, Makarios
(metropolitan) of Philadelpheia, humble among your servants,
protect him, o holy Trinity, in threefold bliss.

Here, the standard formula typically seeking protection for “all three”—scribe, patron, and reader—is reconfigured into a single-person supplicatory formula; Makarios Chrysokephalos, metropolitan of Philadelpheia, is simultaneously the scribe, patron, and primary reader of the manuscript. The reduction in referents is offset by expansion through the addition of modifiers. Instead of the conventional [δακτύλοις] γράψαντα (*the one who wrote this [with his fingers]*) the formula presents τὸν συντεθέντα (*the composer*), accompanied by an adverb of manner (*with yearning*), the scribe’s name, his office, and a self-representational epithet (*humble among your servants*)—all elements commonly used by scribes to signal their identity (category 3.1), with regional references (here, office; in other cases, origin) being optional.

The supplication itself ((4), v.3) is also adapted to align with the reduced number of referents. The typical τοὺς τρεῖς, ὃ (*these three, o*) is replaced by a three-syllable modifier (ἁγία, *holy*) of Τριάς (*Trinity*), adapting to the altered structure.⁵⁰

Beyond flexible adaptations, supplicatory formulae demonstrate a broad spectrum of lexical fixedness. For instance, the following

⁵⁰ A similar alteration occurs in [Type 5212](#) (two referents); two extra verses of modifiers with identification details are observed in [Type 6774](#).

example includes a markedly fixed formula:

(5) *Type 4015*:

Ἐπληρώθη σὺν Θεῷ τὸ μνηλόγιον.
Χριστέ, προηγού τῶν ἐμῶν πονημάτων,
 Θεοδώρου ταπεινοῦ τοῦ Ῥαιδεστίνου,
 τοῦ ταύτης χθονὸς ξένου.

With the help of God, the Menologion was completed.

Christ, guide the labours of mine,
 of Theodoros, the humble one from Rhaidestos,
 a stranger to this earth.

This example is one of only three instances where this formula—or a close variant—appears as part of a longer composition rather than as independent, single-verse epigram, functioning as an autonomous supplicatory expression.⁵¹

This subcategory of supplicatory formulae ranks as the second most frequently attested function, underscoring its centrality in ‘Scribe-related’ Byzantine book epigrams. Its prominence attests to the ritualised and spiritual dimensions of manuscript culture, where the invocations for divine guidance or mercy constitute not only personal expressions of faith but also as manifestations of participation in ritual and communal identity. In Christian liturgical and devotional contexts, supplications as prayers for divine intervention, forgiveness, or support are fundamental elements of worship. This spiritual significance is mirrored in the epigrams, where formulaic supplications, integral to the ritualised framework, bind scribes, patrons, and readers to a shared spiritual experience.

1.2. Appeal to the reader

Appeals to the reader form a subset of the first category, encompassing formulaic sequences as appeals to an abstract, timeless au-

⁵¹ Three at the level of ‘Types’ (normalised representations of—one or more—epigrams), but also three at the level of ‘Occurrences’ (original, non-normalised epigrams); [Type 4015 \(Occurrence 20062\)](#), [Type 4324 \(Occurrence 20638\)](#), [Type 4273 \(Occurrence 20505\)](#).

dience of Byzantine book epigrams. These formulae bridge the gap between scribe and expected audience and transform the act of writing into a ritualised interaction, serving two principal objectives: memorialisation (securing the scribe's remembrance) and solicitation of divine intercession (mediation on the scribe's behalf through prayer).

Memorialisation formulae are the most prevalent within this category, typically featuring the imperatives μέμνησο or μίμνησκε (*remember*) as their core, accompanied by a vocative or nominative address to the reader,⁵² and an object in genitive referencing the scribe. Central to these patterns is a nominalised participle or epithet in the genitive case ((6), τοῦ ξένου; (7), τοῦ γεγραφότος). Optional elements, like pronouns (personal in (6), κάμοῦ; deictic in (9), τινός), and names, ((7), Ἰωάννου; (8), Θεοδώρου; (9), Βασιλείου) may further elaborate on the identity of the pleading individual. Further expansion frequently involves adverbial phrases clarifying the purpose or condition of remembrance, such as subordinate clauses of purpose (ὅπως, ἵνα, *so that*) or temporal-conditional clauses (ὅταν, ἐπὶ πάντων, *whenever*). Altogether, these elements reflect the scribe's aspiration for enduring remembrance in the reader's mind and the broader community consciousness. Despite this aspiration, scribes sometimes adopt anonymity as an expression of humility (e.g. (6), using the self-representation formula (category 3.1) κάμοῦ τοῦ ξένου), while others personalise their appeal through the inclusion of their names and attributes ((7)–(9)).

Memorialisation formulae often appear as independent epigrams:

(6) *Type 2682:*

Οἱ τυχόντες μέμνησθε κάμοῦ τοῦ ξένου.

You, readers, remember me as well, the wanderer.

⁵² Often a sub-formulaic pragmatic modifier, discussed further below.

(7) *Type 2619:*

Ἰωάννου μέμνησο τοῦ γεγραφότος.

Remember Ioannes, the one who wrote this.

Such formulae can also appear in the form of longer compositions, often coalescing with other types of formulae. In (8), a self-representation formula (category 3.1) forms the object (v.3) of the memorialisation formulae core, μέμνησο:

(8) *Type 2725:*

Θεὸν ἰλεούμενος, τίμιε πάτερ,
 Θεοδώρου μέμνησο τοῦ καλλιγράφου,
 ἐπίκλην δ' ἔχοντα Ἁγιοπετρίτης.

Seeking God's favour, honourable Father,
 remember Theodoros, the calligrapher,
also bearing the name Hagiopeptrites.

Elaborations within these formulae often take the form of modifiers of one or more elements:⁵³

(9) *Type 4399:*

Οἱ φιλόχριστοι καὶ φιλόψυχοι πάντες
 καὶ τὸν Θεὸν φέροντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ,
 μέμνησθε τινός, πλὴν πάθους,⁵⁴ Βασιλείου,
 τῷ πόθῳ κτησαμένου τὴν δέλτον ταύτην
 εἰς λύτρον, εἰς ἄμειψιν ἁμαρτημάτων,
 εἰς ἀποτροπὴν πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων·

⁵³ Note that elaboration can be quite extensive. For instance, in [Type 2905](#), following the core structure of the memorialisation formula—comprising {μυμνήσκω} (OBJ: participle + name) (SUBJ: parenthetical element > vocative) (OBJ2: adjectives + name) in verses 1 and 3—there are 23 additional lines containing various adjectives and participles that further modify the name of the patron (Γερασίου, OBJ2).

⁵⁴ It is not unlikely that the scribe intended to write *τληπαθοῦς*, a frequently attested epithet (cf. [Types 4480](#), [2976](#)). However, *πλὴν πάθους* is still plausible and thus retained.

ἔτελέσθη γὰρ τῷ ὄντι μεγαλεῖον
 ἔτους πέλουσα ἑξάκις χιλιάδος
 νῦν καὶ πεντακόσ' ἑξήκοντα καὶ θῆτα,
 ἰνδικτιῶνος δὲ τεσσαρακαιδεκάτης,
 βασιλεύοντος Δουκὸς τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου
 καὶ Εὐδοκίας τῆς τούτου γὰρ συνεύνου,
 παῖδα ἔχοντες Κωνστάντιον τὸν μέγαν.

**All who love Christ and cherish the soul,
 and who bear God within their hearts,
 remember a certain—apart from his suffering—Basil
 who
 acquired this book with yearning,
 for atonement, for the recompense of sins,
 and to avert all adversities.**

For, indeed, this magnificent work was completed
 in the year six thousand
 five hundred sixty-nine,
 in the fourteenth indiction,
 during the reign of Constantine Doukas
 and his consort Eudokia,
 parents of great Constantius.

Memorialisation formulae occasionally function as supplications to the divine, aligning with category 1.1. For example, (15) illustrates an instance where a supplication formula requests God's remembrance (vv.1–4), followed by a plea for redemption of sins (v.6). Nevertheless, their use in appeals to the reader remains significantly more prevalent. Conversely, formulae explicitly requesting redemption are more commonly directly directed to the divine and rarely appear as appeals to the reader; when they do, they are typically framed as prayer-pleading formulae:

(10) *Type 3646:*

Εὔχεσθε τῷ γράψαντι πάντες ὁρῶντες,
 ὅπως ἰλασμὸν πλημμελημάτων λάβοι.

Pray for the scribe, all who behold this,
 so that he may receive atonement for his transgressions.

Prayer-pleading formulae, while less frequent, explicitly invite

the reader to act as an intermediary, petitioning the divine on the scribe's behalf. They typically revolve around εὐχομαι (*pray*), sometimes dependent on another verb ((12), λιπαρῶ) or complemented by one ((11), αἰτῶ) and include a nominalised adjective or participle identifying the subject of the prayer—most often the scribe, though occasionally the patron (e.g. Types 2855, 6129). Optional elements frequently enrich these formulae: vocatives addressing the audience expected to perform the prayer ((12), πανάγιε πάτερ), sometimes with modifiers ((12), v.1-5); a pronoun, usually personal ((15), κάμοι); a prepositional phrase (Type 5761, ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ); or additional modifiers to the nominalised adjective or participle. In rare instances, prayer-pleading formulae are expanded with a substantive (Type 2826, v.25, χάριτι; Type 2931, v.4, τοῦ τυχεῖν σωτηρίας; Type 2955, v.1, Θεοῦ δόσις) or, more commonly, with a subordinate clause—adverbial, of purpose ((10), v.2).

(11) *Type 2366*:⁵⁵

Εὔχεσθε, αἰτῶ, κάμοι τῷ κακιγράφῳ.

Pray, I beg, for me as well, the poorly-skilled scribe.

(12) *Type 5816*:

Κορωνὶς πέλων τῶν θεοπνεύστων βίβλων,
 ὕφανασι πάντας θεοχαράκτους λόγους,
 ῥήσεις ἀφρόνων αἰρετικῶν ἐγξέσας,
 ἰχνηλατήσας τοὺς σοφοὺς Ἀποστόλους,
 λαμπρῶς μαρμαίρων τῇ οἰκουμένη πάσῃ·
λιπαρῶ σε τοίνυν, πανάγιε πάτερ,
ὃ τὴν βίβλον ταύτην ἀγροίκως χαράξας,
ὑπερεύχεσθαι μάλα τῷ ἐμῷ ὕθλῳ.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Bentein and Demoen 2012:81 for a comment on the specific word choice and content of the epigram.

⁵⁶ One would typically expect a genitive rather than a dative here; however, I retain the manuscript reading, as case usage in Medieval Greek is often flexible (cf. also (21)). Given the gradual disappearance of the dative and its replacement by the genitive or accusative (see A. Cooper and E. Georgala, “Dative loss and its replacement in the history of Greek,” in A. van Keme-

You who are the coronis of the God-inspired books,
 having woven together all the divinely inscribed words,
 having expunged the sayings of foolish heretics,
 and traced the footsteps of the wise Apostles,
 shining brilliantly throughout the entire world—
**you—most holy father, I therefore entreat,
 I, who have unskilfully inscribed this book,
 pray with great fervour for my nonsensicalities.**

Overall, reader-appealing formulae are not directly interpersonal in the sense of addressing a specific reader with the expectation of response. The ‘reader’ in this context need not be a reader in the strict sense, or even solely a reader: in (12), the appeal is directed toward the author of the book. Rather, these formulae operate within a ritualised communicative framework that transcends temporal boundaries and fixed roles. Whether invoking passive remembrance or active prayer, these formulae position the text as a medium of enduring spiritual and communal interaction.

Sub-formulaic pragmatic modifiers: Address to the reader

In example (8), the address to the reader (v.1) and subject of the formulaic memorialisation appeal, constitutes an adaptable—and thus variable⁵⁷—but recognisably recurring community-specific linguistic unit. Functionally, this address neither constitutes an independent speech act⁵⁸ nor appears outside of memorialisation appeals in the material, thus it is not granted the status of a category of the typology but rather a sub-formulaic element operating as an intensifying pragmatic modifier of the request it exclusively

nade and N. de Haas (eds.), *Historical Linguistics 2009. Selected Papers from the 19th International Conference on Historical Linguistics*. (Amsterdam 2012) 275–292), this unexpected dative may reflect hypercorrection, an attempt by the scribe to mark his register as ‘learned’ (cf. D. Holton, G. C. Horrocks, M. Janssen, T. Lendari, I. Manolessou, and N. Toufexis, *The Cambridge grammar of medieval and early modern Greek. Vol. 4. Syntax*. (Cambridge 2019), at 1961).

⁵⁷ Its adaptability and variability is exemplified below.

⁵⁸ This alone is not enough to justify exclusion from the typology; the framework is grounded in patterns of communicative function rather than strict speech-act theory. See Section 6.1.

accompanies.

Such address elements serve as pragmatic modifiers of the Request-type formulaic appeal to the reader, shaping how that act is performed by cueing reader involvement and anchoring the epigram within a shared communicative frame. While relatively infrequent in the ‘Scribe-related’ sub-corpus,⁵⁹ they explicitly target the human audience, inviting their participation in the epigram’s ritual and communal context. By employing them, even within texts primarily devoted to the scribe’s self-representation, the scribe creates a quasi-interactive experience,⁶⁰ fostering immediacy and anticipatory reader involvement.

In (13), another characteristic example:

(13) *Type 2562:*

Μέμνησο τοίνυν | **ταῖν χεροῖν ὅστις φέρεις**
 ῥακενδυτοῦντος γραφέως Νικηφόρου,
 Ἐξαπτερύγων ἐκ γένους κατηγμένου,
 σῶσαι Θεὸς, λέγων περ, αὐτὸν ἐν κρίσει.

Remember then, **you who hold this in your hands**,
 the rag-clad scribe, Nikephoros,
 who descends from the line of the Hexapterygoi,
 and say “may God save him in Judgement.”

Idiosyncrasies are not absent in the employment of these sub-formulaic elements either:

(14) *Type 5139:*

Τὴν βίβλον ἦνπερ | **εἰς χεῖρας φέρεις, φίλος**, (14a)
 κτήμα πέφυκεν Ἰωσήφ ῥακενδύτου.
 Μέμνησο, φίλος, **ταῖν χεροῖν ὅστις φέρεις** (14b)
 ῥακενδυτοῦντος Ἰωσήφ μονοτρόπου.

The book which you hold in your hands, friend,

⁵⁹ It is anticipated that they would feature more prominently within the ‘Reader-related’ genre.

⁶⁰ Bentein and Demoen, in *Poetry and its Contexts*.

is a possession of Ioseph the rag-clad.

Remember, friend, **you who hold this in your hands,**
Ioseph, the monk clad in rags.

In (14), the address appears twice within a single epigram (vv.1, 3), serving as an emphatic attention-grabbing device, directing focus to the individual associated with the manuscript (vv.2, 4), the second in direct combination with the formulaic appeal. Notably, the repetition employs distinct syntactic structures while retaining semantic similarity.

A particular type of adaptation of the same sub-formulaic element appears in (15). The first hemistich of (14a) is combined with the second hemistich of (14b). However, the pronoun ὅστις (*you who*, the reader) is replaced by μου νῦν (*my [hands] now*, the scribe's), shifting the formula's focus from the reader to the scribe, depriving it from the pragmatic modifier's usual function and unexpectedly reconfiguring its purpose. This reconfiguration removes the reader from the interaction, aligning instead with the surrounding supplicatory appeals for divine remembrance (vv.1–2) and redemption (vv.5–6), reinforcing the scribe's introspective narrative in the place of the expected remembrance appeal to the epigram's readership. Thus, here, the same sub-formulaic pragmatic modifier of address appears exceptionally as supporting the request sub-category of Supplication to the divine (1.1), nevertheless in conjunction with the same μέμνησο core of the formula, as observed before.

(15) *Type 2963:*

Μνήσθητι, Σῶτερ, δημιουργὲ τῶν ὅλων,
ταῖς τῆς ἀχράντου εὐκτίαις Θεοτόκου,
τοῦ ἐμπόνως γράψαντος Ἀναστασίου
τὴν βίβλον ἦνπερ | ταῖν χεροῖν μου νῦν φέρω
καὶ τάξον αὐτὸν ἐν δικαίῳ τῇ στάσει
πολλῶν παρασχῶν ἀμπλακημάτων λύτρον.

Remember, Saviour, Creator of everything,
through the prayers of the Immaculate Mother of God,
Anastasios, who laboriously wrote
the book I am now holding in my hands,
and place him among the assembly of the righteous,

granting redemption from his many sins.⁶¹

Having shifted the focus to the divine, it should be noted that addresses to the divine—invocations—appear with exceptional frequency within the corpus. Nevertheless, they lack defining characteristics to be treated either as formulaic sequences within the scope of this study, or as sub-formulaic pragmatic modifiers analogous to readership addresses.

These invocations are clearly community-specific, given that they pertain to the Christian God and that Byzantine scribal activity is inextricably bound to the religious milieu. Like readership addresses, they lack functional autonomy as pragmatic modifiers; structurally, they appear within broader formulaic constructions and enhance the supplicatory or commemorative force of adjacent material. However, what differentiates them is the lack of recognisability as patterns. These invocations manifest as concise, parenthetical expressions—not more specific than basic (ADJ) NOUN constructions in vocative or nominative—and are seldom followed by multi-verse elaborations. Such minimal frames could only be treated as formulaic if exhibiting high degree of fixedness; instead, they display very considerable variation, likely reflecting the influence of a vast and diverse liturgical repertoire. Thus, while divine invocations occur frequently and operate as pragmatic modifiers, their status as highly variable instances of a minimal and abstract linguistic frame precludes their inclusion in the typology as formulaic sequences, as well as their consideration as dependent, sub-formulaic elements.

Category 2. *Gratitude to the divine*

This third category is concerned solely with expressions of gratitude directed to the divine. It is the most frequently occurring category in the material under analysis and consists of formulaic sequences that convey reverence, thanksgiving, and acknowledgment of divine grace and support. Given the religion-shaped ritual environment in which these texts were produced, this prevalence is,

⁶¹ This translation is informed by that of Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* Vol.1, 201.

again, unsurprising. Within this category, two main subtypes can be identified: expressions of praise directed to God in the form of doxologies, and acknowledgments of divine assistance in the various stages of manuscript production. These subtypes are not rigidly separated, however, as individual cases frequently exhibit overlapping characteristics.

Formulaic doxologies are the most common expressions of gratitude in this corpus. They are typically centred on the noun δόξα (*glory*) or semantic equivalents, such as χάρις (*grace*), the most frequent variant. Example (16) exemplifies a highly fixed formulaic doxology:

(16) *Type 2110:*

Τῷ συντελεστῇ τῶν καλῶν Θεῷ χάρις.

Grace be to God, the accomplisher of all good.

While some doxologies, like (16), exhibit a high degree of lexical fixedness, most are flexible in form. The most frequently attested pattern omits the verb and relies on a doxological noun, often accompanied by the personal pronoun σοι (*to you*) (17a), a dative or vocative addressing the divine figure, and other modifiers in the same case (17b, ὁμοούσιε). Additional elements, such as verbal or prepositional phrases (17c, v.5, 17a, v.2 respectively) may further expand the formula. In rare cases, the doxological noun is replaced by a doxological verb, as in (17c), where δοξολογοῦμεν (*we praise*) is used:

(17) *Type 2073:*

Σοὶ πρέπει δόξα, τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Λόγῳ,
σὺν τῷ συσθένῳ πνεύματι καὶ συμμόρφῳ. (17a)

Θεὲ τοῦ παντός, ὁμοούσιε, δόξα· (17b)

ἐν προσκύνημα καὶ λατρεία ἢ μία,
ἐνεκεν πάντων ὧν τε ἴσμεν κοῦκ ἴσμεν,
εὐχαριστοῦμεν, δοξολογοῦμεν φόβῳ. (17c)

**To You belongs glory, to the Father and the Word,
along with the Spirit, similar in power and form.**

O God of everything, consubstantial one, glory to You.
 A single act of veneration and one worship,
on account of all things we know and do not know,
we offer thanks and praise You in awe.

Formulae of gratitude acknowledging divine support, while less common, are often—but not exclusively, see (18)—found in single-verse epigrams marking specific stages of the manuscript’s creation, such as its commencement or completion. They frequently are pragmatic modifiers in the form of prepositional phrases introduced by *σὺν* (*with*):

(18) *Type 4264.*

Θεῶ κατάρξας σὺν Θεῶ τέλος ἔσχον.
 Δῶρημα Θεοῦ καὶ πόνος τῶν χειρῶν μου.
 Χεὶρ Ματθαίου τάλανος, σφόδρα ἡμαρτηκότος,
 θύτου ταπεινοῦ καὶ λίαν ταλαιπώρου.

Beginning with God, **with God I** reached the end.
 A gift from God and the labour of my hands.
 The hand of Matthew, a wretched, habitual sinner,
 a humble and greatly afflicted supplicant.

Less frequent but noteworthy examples employ the adjective *συνεργός* (*collaborator*), participles of *συνεργέω* (*συνεργῶν*, *συνεργήσας*), or nouns like *συνεργία* (*collaboration*) and *σύναρσις* (*assistance*) to express acknowledgement of divine aid. These forms often appear in combination with doxologies, sometimes in conjunction with declarations marking the completion of the book:

(19) *Type 4428:*

Ἦ δόξα Χριστῷ τῷ συνεργῷ τοῦ τέλους.

Glory to **Christ, who collaborated** in the completion.

Beyond these explicit expressions of gratitude and acknowledgement, another prominent formula in this category celebrates the all-encompassing nature of God or Christ. It occurs both as stand-alone epigram and within longer compositions:

(20) *Type 2422:*

Ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος.

Christ himself is the beginning and the end.

In sum, gratitude formulae in Byzantine book epigrams encompass praise and acknowledgment, employing a range of formulaic constructions to articulate the scribe's reverence, thanksgiving, and recognition of divine assistance. Whether through rigidly fixed doxologies or more flexible acknowledgments of support, these expressions underscore the profoundly religious context of this epigrammatic tradition. They constitute, if not the primary purpose of the epigrams, at least their most frequent and emblematic feature.

Category 3. *(Re)presentation*

The final category of this typology includes formulae which introduce or highlight individuals, collective identities, or practical aspects of manuscript production. These formulae serve as contextualising devices within the ritualised communicative framework, offering insight into the processes and individuals involved. This category is divided into three subcategories: (3.1) presentation of oneself or others, (3.2) communal identity, and (3.3) practical details.

3.1. Representation - presentation of oneself or others involved

Representation formulae are a hallmark of 'Scribe-related' epigrams, foregrounding individuals—mostly scribes in this subgenre—central to manuscript production. These formulae encapsulate the ritualised practice of self-identification within the scribal tradition, portraying the scribe as both a devout servant and a skilled artisan.

The most prevalent representation formula centres on the dative *χειρὶ* (*by the hand of*), occasionally appearing in its plural form *χειρῶν*(v). This construction typically identifies the individual responsible for producing the manuscript as a tangible artefact. Adjectives modify-

ing χειρὶ are rare but sometimes occur (21b, τλήμονι καὶ ἀμαθῆ, *patient and unlearned*). More frequently, the formula includes participles referring to the manuscript, such as γραφὲν or γραφεῖσα (*written*), and the scribe's name is almost invariably recorded in the genitive case, sometimes with additional attributes (21b, 1.8). In instances where a verb replaces the participle, the scribe's name appears in the nominative case as the subject.

(21) *Type 6848*:⁶²

Πεπλήρωται δ' ἐν ἔτεσι ἕξ χιλίοις
 σὺν ἐννακοσίοις τε τρισκαιδεκάτοις,
 ἰνδικτιῶνος ὁμοῦ τρισκαιδεκάτης·
 συνδρομῆ, ἐξόδῳ τε καὶ τ' ἄλλα πάντα
 φιλευσεβεῖ ἱερεῖ⁶³ ὄνομα Μιχαήλ τε
 οὐ καὶ τὸ παρώνυμον αὐτοῦ Ἀμαρουκάεις. (21a)
 Γραφὲν χειρὶ τλήμονι καὶ ἀμαθεῖ τε,
 Γεωργίῳ ὄνομα τάχα καὶ ἀναγνώστη.⁶⁴ (21b)
 Καὶ οἱ ἐντυχάνοντες ταύτη τῇ βίβλῳ
 εὐχέσθε τῷ γράψαντι καὶ μὴ ἀρᾶσθε.

It was completed in the year six thousand
 nine hundred and thirteen,
 the indiction being the thirteenth as well.

**Through collaboration, expense, and all else,
 by the pious priest named Michael,
 whose surname is Amaroukaeis.
 Handwritten by the wretched and unlearned
 one named George, also an *anagnostes*.**

And those who encounter this book,

⁶² Lines 5, 6 and 8 (each 14 syllables) diverge from the dodecasyllabic metre of the rest of the epigram. Once again, we observe that these longer lines are those containing names—adapted per occasion by inserting the relevant names, often without adjusting the formulation. However, 14-syllable lines (comprising two 7-syllable *cola*) are generally not uncommon; see Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry* Vol.2, 370–371.

⁶³ As in (12), a genitive would be expected here; see the corresponding footnote for discussion.

⁶⁴ As above and in (12), a genitive would be expected here; see the corresponding footnote for discussion.

pray for the one who wrote it and do not imprecate him.

Self-representation dominates this subcategory, reflecting the genre's primary focus on the scribe. However, representation formulae occasionally introduce other contributors significant to the manuscript's creation. While formulae referencing patrons or other figures are less frequent than acknowledgments of divine aid (category 2), they provide insight into dynamics in manuscript production.

The most common constructions referencing contributors involve the term *συνδρομή* (*contribution*), appearing in the dative case (*συνδρομῆ*, *by means of*, (21a)) or as a prepositional phrase (*διὰ συνδρομῆς* or, rarely, *ἐκ συνδρομῆς* in (22), *through contribution*). These formulae generally denote sponsorship or financial support rather than direct involvement in copying, aligning them more closely with 'Patron-related' book epigrams, whereas their appearance ratio in 'Scribe-related' is only 1 out of 143.

(22) *Type 2360:*

Καὶ τῆσδε γραφεὺς Μανουὴλ πέλει τάλας·
 ἔχει δ' εἰς κτήμα τήνδε τὴν θεῖαν βίβλον
 ἢ λαμπρὰ μονὴ τῶν θεῶν Ἀναργύρων,
 ἧτινι κλησὶς ἀρχῆθεν Κοσμιδίου,
ἐκ συνδρομῆς τε καὶ θεαρέστου πόθου
θύτου Γερμανοῦ καὶ ἡγουμένου τῆσδε.

And the scribe here is Manuel the wretched;
 This divine book is held in possession
 by the illustrious monastery of the Holy Anargyroi,
 whose name has been 'of Kosmidion' since the beginning,
through the contribution and God-pleasing zeal
of Germanos, abbot of this monastery.

Uncommon alternative constructions present the term *συνεργία* (*collaboration*) or the prepositional phrase *σὺν* with the dative, both frequently used in references to divine assistance (e.g. (5), (18)), the latter appearing only once in the context of non-divine support.

All things considered, representation formulae as parts of book epigrams situate the manuscript within the broader context of the

scribal and book production milieu, serving as a personal testament to the scribe's labour and creative ingenuity.

3.2. *Presentation of the communal experience*

Formulae highlighting the communal experience underscore shared identities and collective practices within the Byzantine scribal tradition, reflecting the interconnectedness of the community. These expressions often adopt a more poetic and literary style, while maintaining a degree of standardisation which highlights their ritualistic and communal resonance. By doing so, they present, for instance, the act of writing not as a purely personal endeavour but as an alignment with a broader, shared tradition. Standardisation highlights the continuity and the collective nature of scribal labour, situating the work of individual scribes within a larger religious and cultural framework.

One of the most evocative examples is the ὡσπερ ξένοι (*as wanderers...*) formula (see Type 2148, text and metadata), which articulates the relief experienced by scribes upon completing a manuscript. This formula encapsulates the connection between individual effort and common purpose, emphasising the scribe's role within the broader scribal community. Similarly, the formula ἡ χεὶρ ἡ μὲν γράψασα (*the hand that wrote...*) (see Type 1974, text and metadata) juxtaposes the ephemeral nature of the scribe's human life with the enduring legacy of their written texts. By invoking the hand—the primary instrument of scribal labour—this formula captures the tension between mortality and the permanence of the written word, a sentiment resonating deeply with the shared experiences of the scribal community.

Instead of revisiting these well-studied examples, I present two additional communal experience formulae. The first offers a succinct reflection on the relationship between human effort and divine will:

(23) *Type 2297:*

Θεοῦ δίδοντος, οὐδὲν ἰσχύει φθόνος·
καὶ μὴ δίδοντος, οὐδὲν ἀνύει πόνος.

When God bestows, envy has no power;
and when He does not, toil accomplishes nothing.

This formula encapsulates the idea that scribal effort, while vital, ultimately depends on divine grace, a notion that would resonate with members of the scribal community. The inclusion of God as the ultimate arbiter frames Byzantine scribal labour as an activity inextricably linked to the Christian faith which transcends individual achievement. The employment of a standardised and impersonal phrasing points to the universal experience of scribes as instruments of divine will, reinforcing the communal scribal and Christian identity.

The second example also provides a communal perspective:

(24) *Type 5261*:

Παύθητι χεῖρ μου τοῦ πονεῖν εἰς τὸ γράφειν,
ἄρθητι χεῖρ μου πρὸς τὸ ὑψοῦν δεσπότην·
ὡς δ' ἔσπερινὰς θυσίας τούτῳ δίδου
πληρωτικῇ δὲ ὡς ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ.
Πολύστιχον γάρ, Χριστέ μου, τὸ βιβλίον
οὐπερ γραφεὺς πέφυκα κὰν φαυλογράφος·
ἀλλ' ἡ βίβλος μου τῶν βδελυρῶν πρακτέων
μείζων τε τούτων καὶ πολυστιχοτέρα,
γραφεῖσα μου, φεῦ τῆς πονηρογραφίας,
κινοῦντος χεῖρας πρὸς κακὰς ἐργασίας,
αἷς ἀπαλεῖψαι ῥυπτικῶν με δακρύων
ταῦτα προχέων δαψιλεῖ μοι πλημμύρα.
Γράψαις δέ, Σῶτερ, εἰς τὸ σόν με βιβλίον,
κλήσεις ὅπου σὺ τῶν σεσωσμένων γράφεις.

Cease, my hand, from labouring in writing;

Lift, my hand, to exalt the Lord.

Offer (these words) to Him as evening offerings,
and as in full thanksgiving.

For the book is of many lines, O my Christ,
of which I have been the scribe, though a bad one;
yet my book of abhorrent deeds
is greater than this one and more manifold in lines,
written by me—alas, for my wicked writings—
moving my hands to perform evil deeds.

From these, deliver me, for I shed cleansing tears,
 pouring them forth in an abundant flood.
 Write me, O Saviour, in Your book,
 where You inscribe the names of the saved ones.

This communal experience formula highlights the physical exertion inherent in the act of writing—a familiar and relatable aspect of scribal work frequently acknowledged in book epigrams. Here, the formula is also situated within a broader spiritual framework. The epigram progresses from this initial formula presenting the experience of finishing scribal labour, to further expand upon the communal dimension, linking the scribe's personal toil to a higher, divine purpose. By invoking the lifting of the hand in a gesture of devotion, the text elevates scribal labour from a purely physical or intellectual activity to one imbued with profound spiritual significance. In this context, the communal experience formula—again—intertwines the experience of scribal labour with the shared Christian identity of the community.

Such formulae transcend specific context, contrasting with the personal focus of self-representation formulae. By linking individual labour to the shared experiences of the Byzantine scribal community, they imbue the act of manuscript production with a collective and religious significance. The standardised nature of these expressions underscores their communal and ritualistic importance, affirming that the labour of one scribe is inextricably linked to the legacy of many.

3.3. *Presentation of practicalities*

The final subcategory of this typology comprises formulae dedicated to recording the practical aspects of manuscript production, such as marking its completion, specifying significant dates, or documenting ownership by a particular monastery. These formulae serve as markers of a manuscript's contextual framework while remaining firmly embedded within the poetic—most evident in the use of metre—and ritualised—through standardised formulations—tradition of Byzantine book epigrams.

Among the most common patterns in this subcategory are formulae denoting a manuscript's ownership by a monastery:

(25) *Type 32496*:

Ἡ βίβλος αὐτή τῆς μονῆς Περιβλέπτου
τῆς κειμένης ἔγγιστα τῆς Ψαμαθείου·
ἀρχαϊκὴ δὲ τῆς μονῆς κλήσις Προῦσα.

This book belongs to the Monastery of Peribleptos,
located very close to (the gate/district) of Psamathos.
The earlier name of the monastery was Prousa.

The core structure of this practicalities formula revolves around the genitive τῆς μονῆς (*of the monastery*) and the monastery's name ((25), Περιβλέπτου). The subject of the sentence is almost invariably explicit, most commonly ἡ βίβλος (*the book*), as in (25), or one of its lexical variants, such as τὸ βιβλίον. This is often accompanied by an emphatic element, typically a demonstrative pronoun ((25), αὐτή) or, less frequently, the adverbial dative τῆδε (*here*). Additional modifiers of the subject or the monastery are rare, as is the inclusion of a verb. When a verb is employed, πέφυκε (*came to be*) is the most common choice, sometimes appearing as part of a predicate with κτήμα (*possession*).

The second and third verses of (25) illustrate optional expansions. Verse 2 specifies the monastery's location, with roughly half of its attestations employing phrasing identical to that of (25), though referencing other sites. Verse 3 identifies alternative names for the monastery, typically adopting the precise construction observed in (25) to reference its earlier appellation. Both sub-formulaic components occur rarely, the former more often than the latter.

Formulae addressing practicalities exemplify the seamless fusion of functionality and ritualisation within Byzantine epigrams. Although these expressions primarily serve practical objectives, their formulaic and metrical nature simultaneously reflects the ritualistic ethos of Byzantine scribal culture. By adhering to standardised patterns, these formulae not only fulfil their utilitarian role but also evoke a sense of continuity in collective tradition and identity. Consequently, this subcategory epitomises the hybrid nature of book epigrams, wherein practical necessity intertwines with poetic expression and communal significance, endowing the manuscript with both functional and symbolic resonance.

6. Discussion

This study emerges from examination and annotation of a representative corpus of ‘Types’—normalised texts that consolidate multiple, nearly identical textual ‘Occurrences.’ This choice has facilitated the identification and classification of recurring formulaic patterns, leading to the development of a typology of formulaic material within Byzantine epigrams, organised by pragmatic function. While the typology proposed provides a stable framework, it is necessarily grounded in the particular subset of data analysed here. Transitioning from individual epigram ‘Occurrences’ to the ‘Types’ representing them, their core pragmatic purpose is expected to remain unchanged despite lexical and structural flexibility.

This research does not provide specific statistics of formula frequency or distribution, as such an undertaking would require a comprehensive view of the vast and continuously expanding DBBE ‘Occurrences’ corpus. However, this limitation does not detract from the value of the study, which lays the theoretical groundwork for further inquiries into case studies. Instead, it highlights the scope for intended future exploration of formulaic language within Byzantine scribal culture.

Moreover, it should be noted that a strict typology cannot fully capture the complexities of the material. While categories provide useful conceptual boundaries, certain formulae resist singular classification. The formula below (v.2) exemplifies dual categorisation:

(26) *Type 5036:*

Τῆς Ὀκτωήχου τῆς νέας θεῖον τέλος·
Θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον καὶ Θεοκτίστου πόνος.
 Καὶ τοῦτο ῥευστὸν προσδόκα τὸ μὴ ῥέον.

The divine end of the New Octoechos;
the gift of God and the labour of Theoktistos.
 And even this, though motionless, expect it to be fleeting.

This formula typically appears as a single-verse epigram (see Type 3805), demonstrating remarkable lexical and structural consistency. Lexical substitutions are rare, while minor variation in word order

occasionally occurs. In terms of pragmatic function, it simultaneously acknowledges divine contribution (category 2) and represents Theoktistos' labour (category 3.1). Importantly, these two elements are not separate formulae combined but rather a recurring cohesive unit performing overlapping roles.

Such examples underscore the fluidity and interconnectedness of the personal, communal, and religious dimensions—and thus of the categories within the typology. Formulae often serve layered purposes, seamlessly interlacing individual, collective, and spiritual elements. This fluidity vividly illustrates the dynamic nature of formulaic language in Byzantine book epigrams, which resists rigid classification: variation in form proved too extant to serve as basis for typology, while even pragmatic functions, though way more consistent, do not always yield clear-cut categorisation.

7. Conclusion

This study has brought forth the formulaic material of Byzantine book epigrams as an intricate reflection of the cultural, social, and religious dimensions of Byzantine scribal culture. By focusing on the heavily formulaic 'Scribe-related' epigrams within the DBBE corpus, the research underscores the dual nature of these texts, which, while poetic and highly formulaic, allow for individual creativity and reflect the utilitarian and social functions of manuscript production. Exploration of existing models of formulaicity has highlighted the need for a distinct analytical framework that considers the literary, pragmatic, and ritual roles of these epigrams, rooted in their cultural and religious milieu.

This study has demonstrated how formulaic language served as a dynamic tool for ritualised communication, fostering community identity and religious participation. The centrality of formulaic sequences in the Byzantine scribal tradition reveals their role in multi-layered rituals, blending personal devotion with pragmatic conventions to reinforce both spiritual and communal dimensions.

The typology, based on functional categorisation, provides a nuanced understanding of formulaic material by reflecting the communicative and ritual needs of scribes. Formulaic reader appeals, supplications, and expressions of gratitude demonstrate how epi-

grams foster interaction with two audiences—divine and human—emphasising piety, communal identity, and the ritualised nature of manuscript culture. Representation and communal experience formulae situate the individual scribe within the broader scribal community, while formulae addressing practicalities weave utilitarian details into the fabric of epigram composition. Moreover, the interconnectedness and multifunctionality of formulae within Byzantine book epigrams highlight their fluidity, with multiple functions sometimes entwined. This dynamic framework underscores that formulaic language was not merely a tool of communication but a recognised medium of cultural, religious, and communal expression.

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